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Letter dated 9 July 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Lebanon hereby requests the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 July 2002, for a further interim period of six months in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), both of 19 March 1978. It does so in view of the fact that the continued deployment of the Force is necessary if it is to complete the task entrusted to it, given that, as per your pertinent observations in various reports, an important part of its mandate has not yet been fulfilled, particularly "the restoration of international peace and security", and especially in view of the serious violations and provocations committed by Israel on a daily basis on land, at sea and in the air, which constitute ongoing aggression against Lebanese sovereignty and are in breach of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

In this context, Lebanon stresses the need to maintain the presence of UNIFIL in accordance with resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), without any change in its strength or its mandate, especially in the light of the conditions prevailing in the area, which have worsened and grown extremely dangerous. This trend is perfectly in keeping with the conclusion you reached in paragraph 11 of your report S/2001/423 of 30 April 2001, to the effect that the reconfiguration of the Force might be reconsidered if "there is any drastic change in the region".

Given the foregoing, it is my Government's belief that any reconfiguration of the Force would undermine the existing sense of security and safety and would hinder the full implementation of the Force's mandate.

The Government of Lebanon wishes to emphasize, furthermore, that the continued deployment of UNIFIL exemplifies the commitment of the international community to the restoration of the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as stipulated in resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978).

The Government of Lebanon is continuing to take further steps for the effective reinstatement of its authority in the liberated areas, while the Lebanese authorities continue to operationalize public services in the South with a view to its integration with the other regions of Lebanon.

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Lebanon hereby calls upon the Security Council to make efforts for the release of those Lebanese who have for years been detained in Israeli prisons illegally and in barefaced defiance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols. It urgently demands the removal of the hundreds of thousands of mines left in Lebanese territory by the Israeli occupation, which continue to bring death and injury to civilians and to restrict their freedom of activity and movement, especially now that the United Nations has become aware of the existence of a greater number of such mines.

Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East with a view to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region based on compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference. The "Arab peace initiative", adopted by the Arab States at the Beirut Summit last March, was a historical step in the direction of a just and comprehensive peace that was met by Israel with rejection and further acts of aggression.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, to UNIFIL, its commanders and soldiers and the troop-contributing countries for their tireless efforts and the sacrifices they have made to implement the Force's mandate.

Furthermore, the Government of Lebanon wishes to convey to you its appreciation for your tireless efforts, which help to enhance the strength of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Houssam Asaad **Diab**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.